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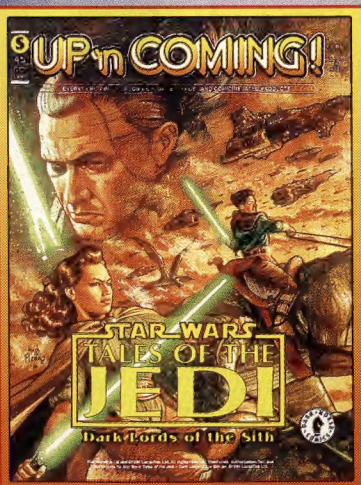

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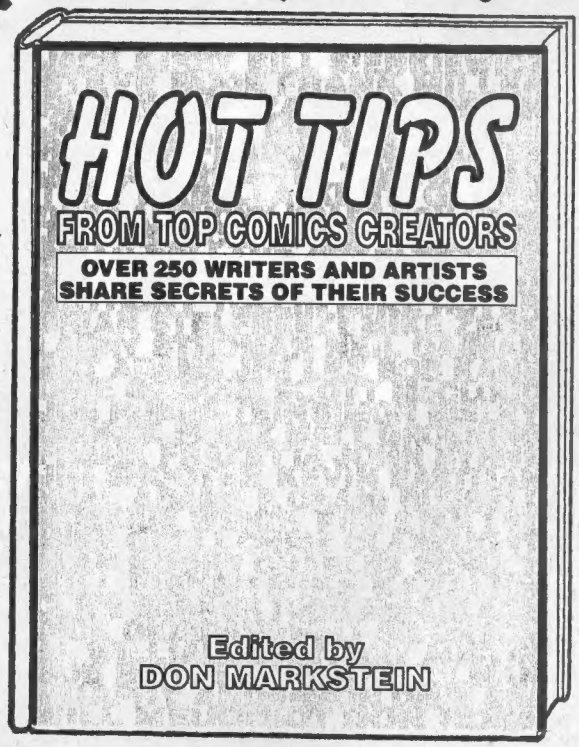

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editor/publisher

conceived by
JIM SALICRUP
editorial and design consultant emeritus

DARREL L BOATZ
MARK LUCAS
CHARLES S NOVINSKIE
associate editors

JEFF GELB
contributing editor

POWERHOUSE GRAPHICS
art & tone direction

DON MARKSTEIN
typography

GORTEL
GUILLIA
production

ELIZABETH BROUS
JOHN DENNETT
HENRY ESHELMAN
PATRICIA JERES
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JIM CARREY AS THE MASK

photo by:
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NEW LINE CINEMA

Art: Jim Salicrup

READERS RESPOND

Early reader responses to the questionnaire included in issue #134 with our Comics Crisis roundtable are, so far, from males in their late 30s — who have some affiliation with the comics industry in one capacity or another — and who acquire their comics principally from direct retailers.

The average amount spent on comics per month ranges from $32 to "too much!" and suggestions to comics retailers for getting non-comics readers into shops include: "Put a few shekels by for making a clean, well-lighted place, emphasize posters of mature-style art in the winidows and store. Organize display around *genre* of material. Advertise same." And, even more explicitly: "Send out mailers pointing up high-quality adult comics fare, advertise on TV, do special sales, and carry kids' material."

Main reading/viewing interests outside comics include: novels and non-fiction (mainstream, mystery, sf, etc.); action movies; news and movie classics on TV, history and some novels . . . but adventure movies, too.

As for whether more comics should be geared toward these type interests, "but of course, *mon ami,*" although "probably not history — tends to come off dry, in comics. But any voyage of *personal discovery* — done with high degree of quality, that is."

And as for whether respondents would support comics *not* suited to their own interests, "Oh, come on! *That* is the American dream," represents one end of the opinion spectrum, and "Depends — probably leave them alone," represents the other.

Do comics have to move outside the direct sales market to become mainstream? Readers no longer seem certain they can depend on the direct system. "I still think the retail outlets can help substantially," betrays the crisis of confidence, and "Outside, maybe," confirms it.

This should give pause to the reckless revision that's well under way of a proven system — but then, no amount of crashes, publishers and retailers going out of business, seems to have swayed the march of surviving distributors toward a "one-world" system of onerous terms that promote the creatively-constricted mainstream material at the expense of the "third world" of independent titles, including COMICS INTERVIEW.

~Dave

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UP FRONT
a word from *dak*

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SPOTLIGHT:
THE MASK/ TIMECOP
move over, *verhoeven* — make way for *verheiden,* movies' newest master of adventure! media maven *jeff gelb* made contact with *mark* just before *the mask* motion picture was scheduled to premiere — and we made a special point of focusing attention on *the mask,* based on the Dark Horse comics character, because the buzz was that this one would be BIG! we were right — but we didn't stop there. *jean-claude van damme's* new *timecop* is set for mid-september release, and it may be even BIGGER! stir in the sequel to *sam raimi's* cult smash, *darkman,* and you have the ingredients for a very unique issue of *interview,* indeed. special effects and comics-based movies have captured the big screen, and this issue spotlights the cream of this year's crop.

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LETTERS:
THE LAST WORD
for more on what retailers can do about the comics crisis, refer to "the kid gloves are off"

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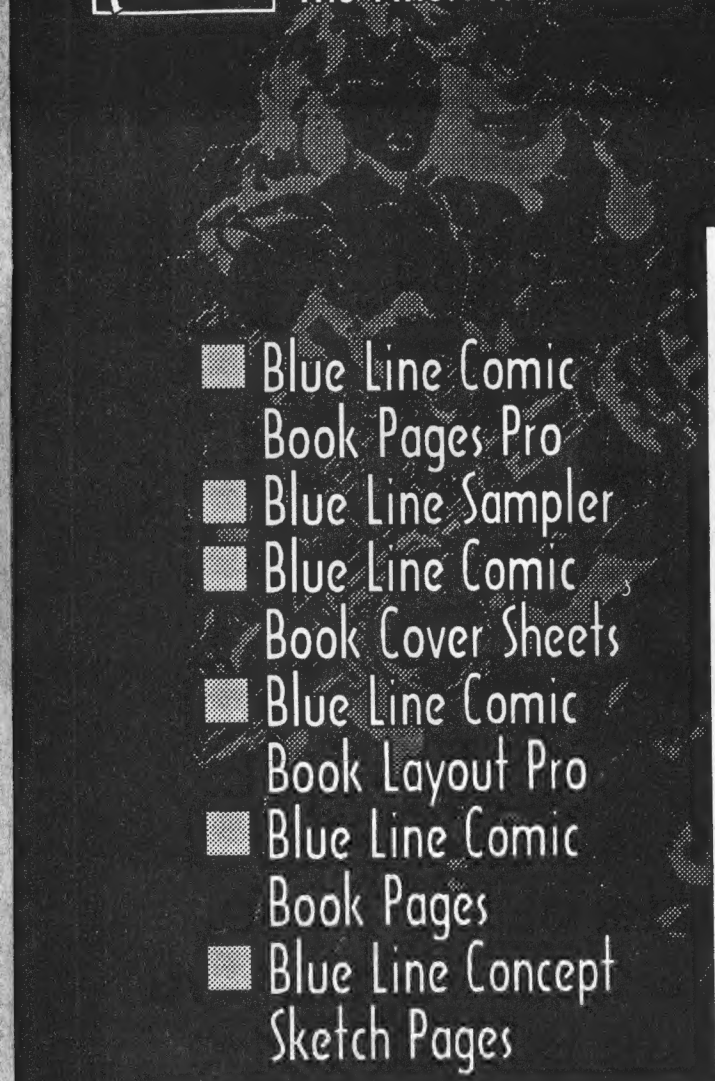

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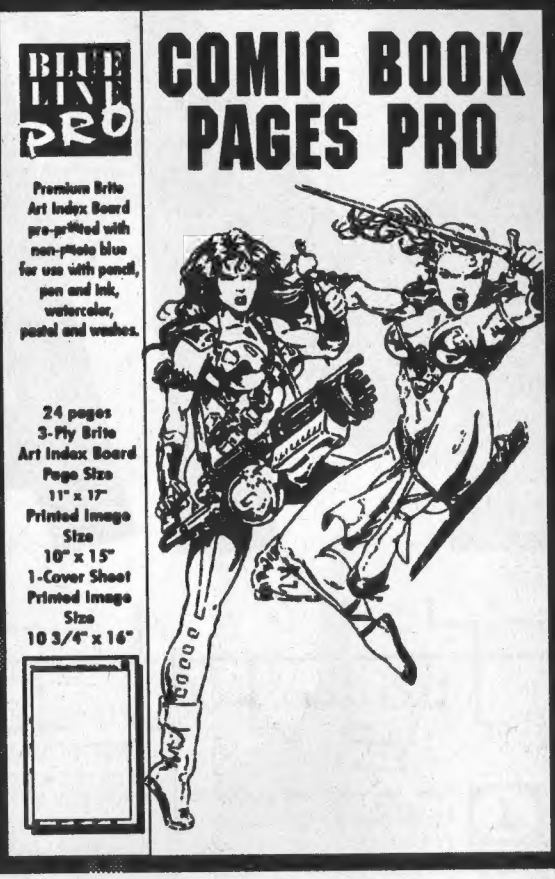
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"I did THE MASK for New Line. I was the

THE MASK

TIMECOP

I knew Mark Verheiden first as his fan and later as his friend. I first encountered his writing in his initial, ground-breaking AMERICAN mini-series for Dark Horse in 1987. What he had created, I felt, was a CAPTAIN AMERICA for the cynical '80s. As a lifelong fan of Cap, I found Mark's take to be intelligent and exciting in a way I had not found the Marvel comic to be in decades.

I was hooked. From there, I followed Mark wherever his writing talents took him, from ALIENS and PREDATORS mini-series for Dark Horse to various assignments for DC, including PHANTOM and NIGHTWING in the sadly-aborted ACTION WEEKLY comic book. Then it was over to Marvel's Epic for his STALKERS serial. Every once in awhile, there was another delicious AMERICAN mini-series to devour, but never enough. And in time, there was no comics work from Mark at all.

By that time, my path had crossed his in another arena: in the pages of CAPA-alpha, comics fandom's oldest ongoing amateur press alliance. He and I were both sending regular fanzine contributions to a central mailer, who collated work from up to 40 members each month and returned them to each one of us, providing us with hours of great reading and many new friendships.

Jim Carrey, starring as The Mask.

Mark and I found we had several things in common aside from our love of comics, including rock music and low-budget horror films. And a love of good writing — which is why I enlisted him to write stories for two of my prose horror anthologies for Pocket Books, SHOCK ROCK and SHOCK ROCK 2. For the first he turned in a darkly humorous story, loosely biographical, about a CD fan who purchases the ultimate collectible. For the second, he switched mental gears entirely for a chillingly frightful tale of a psychopath whose interest in music leads to murder. I was so im-

second writer; Michael Fallon was the first."

pressed with this story that I led off the second volume of SHOCK ROCK with it. To date, I believe these stories represent Mark's sole published prose fiction work, and it's well worth searching out — even if I am the editor of these anthologies!

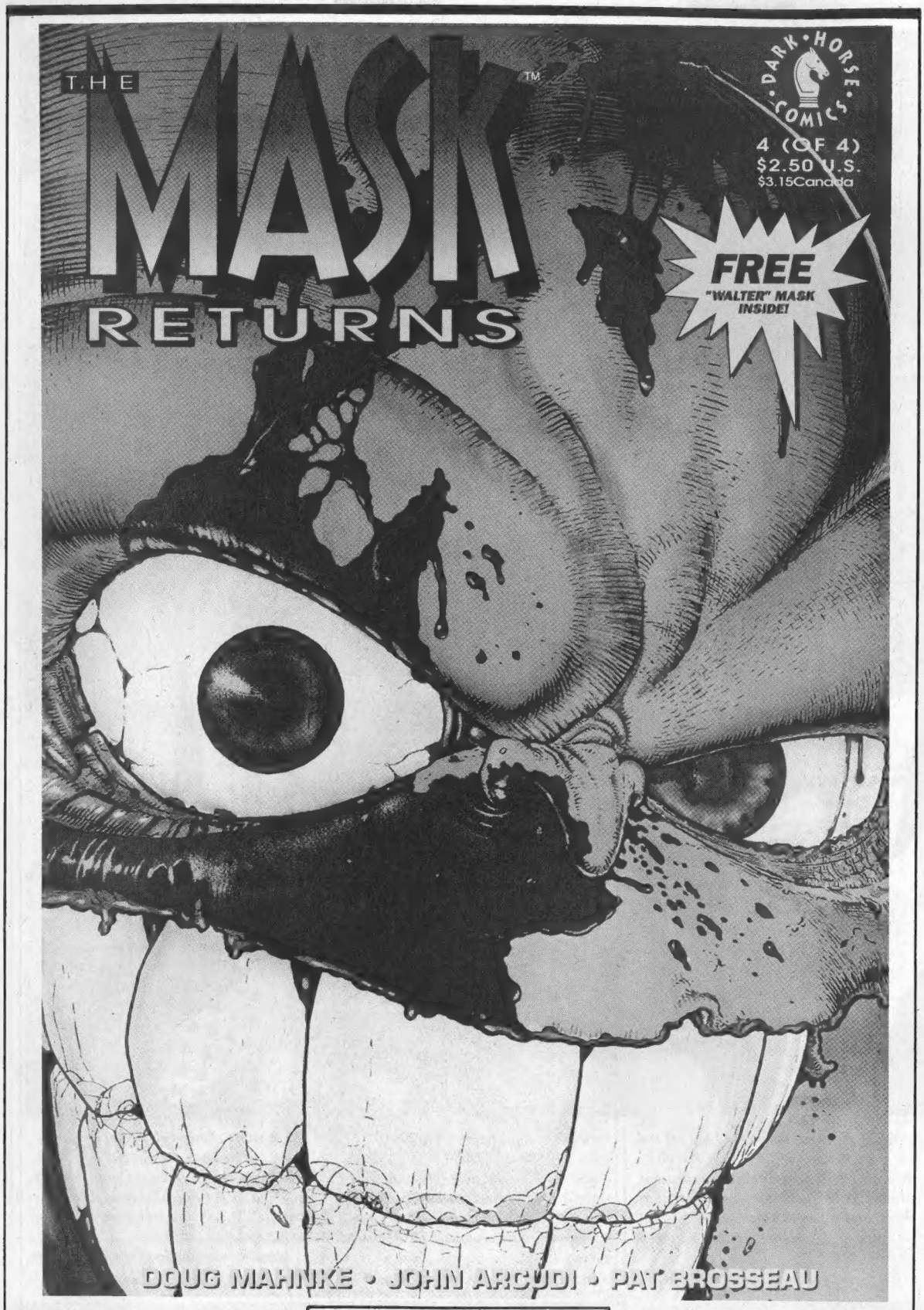
It's been great to work with Mark Verheiden, and better still to become his friend. So when COMICS INTERVIEW asked me to talk with him about his various film projects (which have kept him away from comics for several years now, dammit!), I was only too happy to agree.

Over diet-conscious turkey dinners at the historic Roosevelt Hotel in downtown Hollywood, we caught up on his recent work in films as well as his colorful career overall, while sidetracking to discuss the sobering state of today's comics industry.

Are your napkins in place? Then join us . . .

All art and photos accompanying this interview: THE MASK comic art TM & ©1994 Dark Horse Comics, Inc. / THE MASK movie stills ©1994 New Line Productions, Inc. / TIMECOP comic art TM & ©1994 Dark Horse Comics, Inc. & Mark Verheiden / TIMECOP movie stills ©1994 Largo Entertainment.

"Joel Silver, who produced DIE HARD and LETHAL



WEAPON, liked my PREDATOR story."

"The Mask" comic that inspired the Jim Carrey film.

JEFF GELB: *What have you done in films so far?*

MARK VERHEIDEN: I basically moved to Los Angeles in 1983 to do films. Not long after I got here, a friend hooked me up with a low-budget producer named **Peter Maris.** He'd made a few low-budget action films. The last one before the one I did for them was called "Land of Doom."

JEFF: *Now available at Suncoast Video.*

MARK: Actually, it *is* available on video. I rented it in '84-85. Anyway, I met with Peter and did two scripts for him. One was called STALKERS (which we later stole the title of for a comic-book series). The other was called TERROR SQUAD, which actually got made. STALKERS didn't get made but reverted back to me. I got paid, which made me happy at the time. TERROR SQUAD was totally rewritten before it got made so the only thing left was the title. But I still ended up with a story credit on it. So, technically, that's my first credit. I did some comics. Then, about 1989, while I was working on PREDATOR for Dark Horse, I got a call from **Joel Silver,** who

"I moved to LA in 1983 to do films."

One of Dark Horse's big summer projects will be the screen adaptation of *The Mask*, starring Jim Carrey (left, with Ben Stein).

The Mask (Jim Carrey) professes his love to sexy lounge singer Tina Carlyle in New Line Cinema's action-comedy.

"My first script was to have a dog put on the mask."

produced DIE HARD, the LETHAL WEAPON films, and HUDSON HAWK. He called me up and said he really liked my PREDATOR story. At that time, the first issue had just come out (of the four-issue series). He asked me to come in and tell him how it ends. "We want to use it for the next movie." So, I went in the next day, talked to them about PREDATOR, talked to the two writers of the original PREDATOR movie, **Jim** and **John Thomas,** and while I was there I pitched THE AMERICAN, a comic I'd created for Dark Horse back in 1986. They bought it. That became my first studio screenwriting job. That didn't get made. But, I did two more projects for **Silver.**

JEFF: *Why didn't that get made?*

MARK: I've had three movies made now. I have no idea why one gets made and another doesn't.

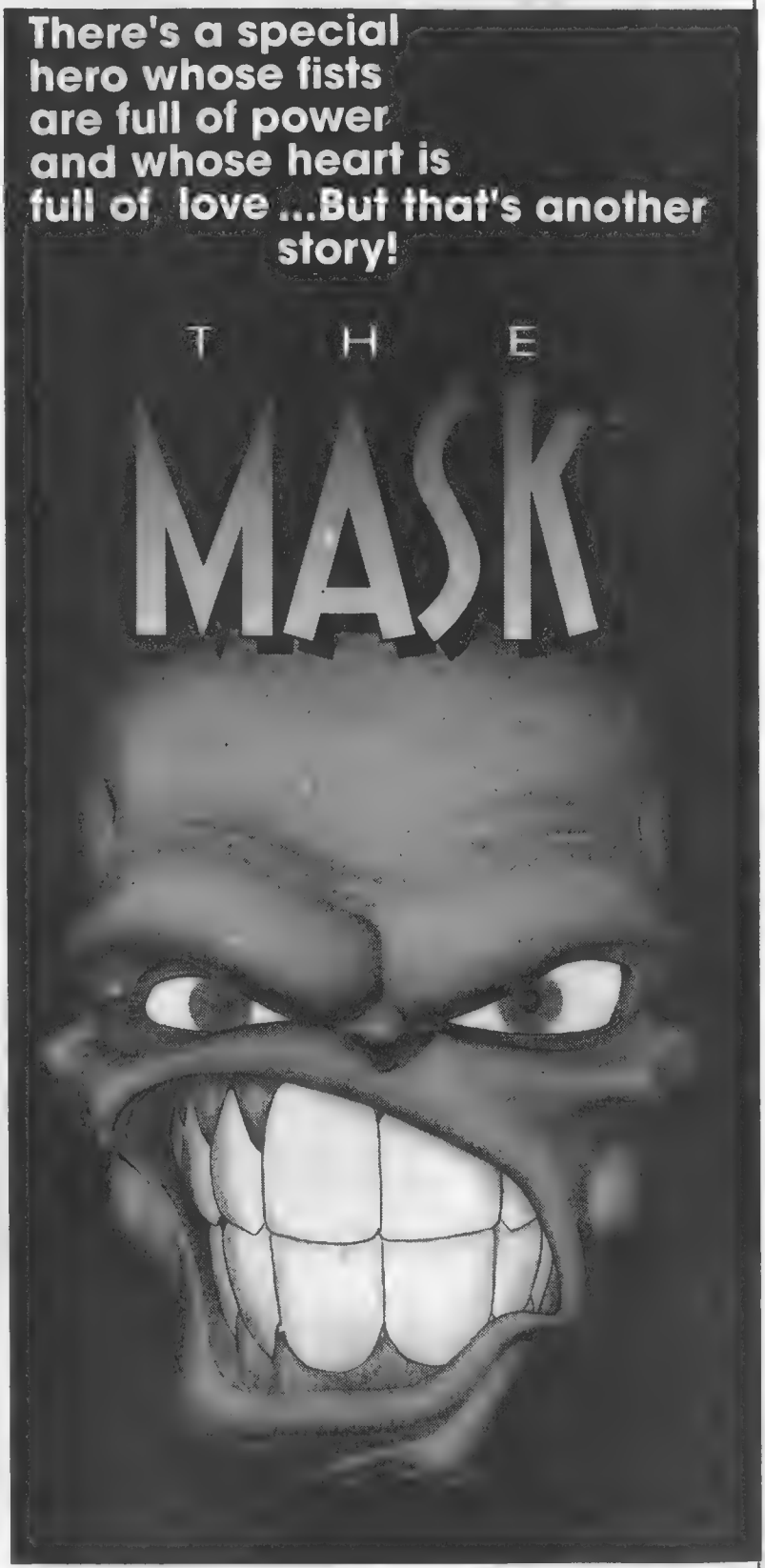
JEFF: *Were they scared away by the superhero angle of it?*

MARK: No, I don't think they were scared away by it. I think they were trying to find a hook on it that made it understandable to them in an era when BATMAN came out. Toward the end, **Stephen Hopkins,** the director who did PREDATOR 2 and BLOWN AWAY, attached to it. We had three or four meetings together. We were trying to push it in a direction that I wouldn't have been totally uncomfortable taking but I wasn't that thrilled with. We were going to try to put it in the year 2000 and made The American more Batmanesque in a dark society in the future. THE AMERICAN itself is more of a story of a patriot who is lost in a modern-day America. That was something of a change. Basically, Warner Bros.' and **Silver's** option was up and they didn't want to give us any money to renew it. I figured they had it for 2½ years; it was probably time to take it somewhere else. We have someone looking at it now. I still have high hopes for it. I like THE AMERICAN. People who read it like it. I think they can still get it set up as a movie, maybe even as TV, with the syndicated stuff going on like TEKWAR.

JEFF: *After that?*

MARK: After THE AMERICAN, I did two more scripts for **Silver.** Also about that time I did THE MASK (in 1991) for New Line. I was the second writer after a fellow named **Michael Fallon** did the first. They brought me in after his draft was done. I think Michael did a pretty good job, but they brought me in to try to put the comedic elements back in that Michael didn't have enough of.

JEFF: *Did your coming on to that*



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"The Cuban Pete band scene is mine. I actually sent in a tape of Desi Arnaz."

project have anything to do with your comics background?

MARK: It had more to do with my **Mike Richardson** background — since he was executive producer. He basically wanted someone that was in sync with his feelings on the project. He's the publisher and owner of Dark Horse. He convinced New Line at the time, when I only had THE AMERICAN done, that I should have a shot at it. I did a rewrite on that. I did just one pass. I did another project for New Line right after that, MR. POPPER'S PENGUINS, an adaptation of the children's book. That didn't go anywhere. Meanwhile, they brought in another director and writer on THE MASK. He tried to turn it into something like a horror film. After he turned that in, the studio said, "Get outta here," and went back to my draft. The studio then brought in another writer. He finally did the draft that **Chuck Russell** made. However, enough of my stuff remained in to give me a screen credit for the Writers' Guild.

JEFF: *When people see the movie, what will they see that is identifiably yours?*

MARK: Essentially, the Cuban Pete band scene is mine. I actually sent in a tape of **Desi Arnaz** doing Cuban Pete with my draft. I said you have to have this music on the screen.

JEFF: *That's quite substantial. My understanding is that this is a real centerpiece of the film.*

MARK: They're doing a hit single of it and all that kind of stuff. I'm very happy with it. The dancing with the cop and the woman who comes out was all mine. I wrote the scene in the beginning where the alarm clock goes off and he swings the big hammer out of his pocket. About the

Edge City's finest come under the spell of The Mask (Jim Carrey, center) in New Line Cinema's action-comedy.

"I like the take Mike Richardson had on

only other scene intact is the one where the detectives are interrogating him and he's pulling all of this stuff out of his pockets. A lot of my other ideas were cherry-picked all over the place. For example, my script was the first to have a dog put on the mask, turn into a monster dog, bark, and blow up a building.

JEFF: *Did you come to THE MASK as a fan of the comic book?*

MARK: At that time, there had only been one issue of the **John Arcudi** comic out. I think I'd read some xeroxes. I did like the comic a lot. As much as the comic, I like the take that Mike had on it, a live-action cartoon character. The weird thing was, in 1991, none of this CGI computer-generated imagery existed in this form. **James Cameron** was probably just doing T2 at that time. So, we had no idea how we were going to do these effects, having eyeballs and tongues popping out. We thought it would be some cruddy make-up effect. Basically, technology caught up to us.

JEFF: *Have you seen the results yet?*

MARK: No, I haven't seen the final film, only a rough cut.

JEFF: *I was relatively happy with what I saw. I think the effects will push it over the top. I think it will make a lot of money.*

Dark Horse publisher and movie producer Mike Richardson on the set of THE MASK with Jim Carrey.

MARK: It will probably do that. I hate to predict. You hate to predict things.

JEFF: *Your involvement with that film was quite a while ago.*

MARK: I feel pretty removed from it.

JEFF: *Then what?*

MARK: I spent a lot of time doing an adaptation of the **Sidney Sheldon** book, THE DOOMSDAY CONSPIRACY.

JEFF: *Which I actually read.*

MARK: Which didn't go anywhere. I have no idea if it's being made. For all I know, I'll read in the trades tomorrow that it's being picked up to star **Tom Cruise.**

JEFF: *Interesting idea. It was a UFO story. But, it was a kitchen sink kind of idea. I don't know how you'd pull it all together.*

MARK: We played with it a lot. We added some elements that I think made it a real crackerjack spy thriller, with an alien on Earth, chasing spies and all. I worked with a partner on that for the first and probably last time. Nothing against him, but I prefer working solo. That took a lot of time. I had a lot of projects I almost did. I was almost offered V FOR VENDETTA. Warner Bros. already had a draft done by a woman named **Hilary Henkin.** She did ROMEO IS BLEEDING. I thought her script was pretty inventive.

it, a live-action cartoon character."

But, I don't think the studio liked it. I know **David Lloyd,** who drew V FOR VENDETTA, didn't like it. I think DC was keeping them in the loop. His notes were scathing. He was extremely unhappy with that draft. I went in with a director named **Brett Leonard,** who did THE LAWNMOWER MAN. We came up with a take that was extremely close to the comic. What happened was that the money ultimately didn't work on that. I have to admit I had mixed feelings. I think it was better than WATCHMEN, one of the best comic books ever. I don't know if a movie could ever come up to the depth of the comic. I know I didn't want to be at the end of one of those **David Lloyd** letters. After that, I started working on TIME COP.

JEFF: *Which was a Mike Richardson concept?*

MARK: Mike and I met at a bar in 1989 talking over ideas. He had this idea for a movie/comic-book project. We had the idea to do both at the time. A cop goes back in time, chasing a bad guy, and chases the bad guy to the exact moment when his wife is being murdered. How does he react to that in a police environment where it's the death penalty to do anything to change the past, except to

"We had no idea how to do these effects. Technology caught up."

"I just saw TIMECOP and can't complain too much. It's beat-for-beat my script."

In the futuristic thriller TIMECOP, Jean-Claude Van Damme stars as Max Walker, a lone-wolf policeman who is unwillingly partnered with Agent Sarah Fielding (Gloria Reuben) during a mission into the past.

"I was almost offered V FOR VENDETTA.

Here and scattered throughout: Preview art from TIMECOP, the full-color comic, written by Mark Verheiden and drawn by Ron Randall. Issue #1 will be in comic shops just in time for the movie. Issue #2 will reveal Verheiden's special "creator's cut" version of the story.

I'M WORRIED ABOUT YOU, MAX.
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NOBODY GOES BACK.
DON'T QUOTE ME THE DAMN LAW--
I THINK ABOUT HER ALL THE TIME--
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU WANT FROM ME, MATOUSEK?

After that, I started working on TIMECOP."

Jean-Claude Van Damme stars in TIMECOP as Max Walker, a futuristic policeman who must travel back in time to prevent a corrupt senator from changing history.

stop the bad guy? I thought it was a cool idea. It attracted me for a thousand reasons, but the big reason was it was so difficult in an action film to find an intrinsic emotional hook that's not just sewn in and cut out later. In this movie, the story of the wife and the film's hero's attempt to make things right again is absolutely essential to the plot. It doesn't get cut out.

JEFF: *Do you like time travel films?*

MARK: I think they're a blast. TERMINATOR works well. They fall apart if you think about them, but who cares? They're fun.

JEFF: *Were you at all concerned about people calling it a TERMINATOR clone?*

MARK: Well, there aren't any robots in it or anything.

JEFF: *Do you think it helped to sell it as a time-travel/cop story?*

MARK: I think it will now. In a world where there are a million cop movies, one

"It's about 40% in the year 2004, 40% in the present, and a big scene set in 1929."

The futuristic thriller TIMECOP is set in the year 2004, when time travel is a reality and a new police corps, the Time Enforcement Commission, has been organized to enforce a simple rule: No One Goes Back.

"What if Saddam Hussei[illegible]?"

with futuristic elements and all the dazzle you get from a science-fiction film is a real plus.

JEFF: *How much of the film as it actually is, is future vs. present?*

MARK: Some of it is in the past. It's about 40% in the year 2004, probably 40% in the present, and there's a big scene in 1929.

JEFF: *How did you get around the near-future angle for time travel? How did you get around the idea that someone in 2004 knows how to travel back in time?*

MARK: We had this whole thing worked out. In the year 1970, a German scientist figured out time travel.

"The Time Enforcement Division is designed

JEFF: *So it's an alternate universe?*
MARK: Yes. We've included one different thing, but otherwise the world is like ours.
JEFF: *So the leap of faith you have to take for movies like this is that time travel was discovered 20 years ago.*
MARK: And once the government realized what could be done with time travel in nefarious ways, they clamped down on it as much as they could. Still, there are people who manage to put together the technology to go back in time. Once you see the movie, you'll see there's a big rocket sled that throws you half a mile into this electronic field, there's a two-story building, and there's computer stuff. As we postulate, other countries have come up with the time-travel procedure. At the beginning of the film, you see a guy running down what the threat could be. What if **Saddam Hussein** got ahold of the time travel machine, went to 1944, got the Manhattan Project plans, and got the nuclear bomb before anyone else? things like that. The government has put together an agency called the Time Enforcement Division, which is designed to keep track of possible time-travel crimes. When they spot one, they send someone back, like our hero Max Walker (played in the movie by **Jean Claude Van Damme**), to take care of the problem.
JEFF: *Specifically, the death of the cop's wife?*
MARK: He goes back to 1929 chasing his own ex-partner, who's been convinced to go back in time and buy stock for someone. You discover it's a corrupt

"We were going to set it up as a project at Largo. They offered an overall deal."

to keep track of time-travel crimes."

senator who's trying to raise enough money to run a presidential campaign in the year 2004. So, Walker has to chase him down.

JEFF: *When you and Mike first discussed this, was it just you looking for a comic book to do or was it always thought of as a property for movies? And, what is Dark Horse's movie production company called?*

MARK: Dark Horse Entertainment. Mike and I go back. These were just things Mike had been thinking about and I was thinking about. When he said TIME COP, he was thinking about giving it to this guy or that guy. I said no, you're giving it to me. That's a great one. Let's do it. We wanted to do both comic and film. In late '89, I did a treatment, which is basically the movie as you see it now. It hasn't changed much.

JEFF: *Are you sole screenwriter on this one?*

MARK: For the Writer's Guild, I was sole screenwriter. There was this guy who came in and did a dialogue polish towards the end. I just saw the movie and have to say I can't complain too much. It's beat-for-beat my script. There are some things that have been cut and some dialogue's a bit different. But, it's what we gave them.

"It's a corrupt senator trying to raise money to run a presidential campaign."

In the futuristic thriller TIMECOP, Ron Silver plays Senator Aaron McComb, a corrupt politician seeking to use his power of time control to rewrite history for personal gain.

"TIMECOP was one of those projects . . . a big-

I think time travel made the script very tight. If you start pulling pieces out, it all falls apart.

JEFF: *At what point did you guys think this could actually become a project?*

MARK: In 1990, after I did the treatment, I was pitching it to producers in town. The idea was that Mike would come into it as a producer with a producer who was here already and we'd go to a studio together. We pitched it maybe 30 times. I finally pitched it to **Sam Raimi** and **Rob Tapert.** They responded very well and wanted to be attached to it. With them on board, we took it to Largo — **Larry Gordon, Joel Silver's** old partner. After a year of messing around, they set it up there in late '91. We were originally going to set it up just as a project at Largo. They then offered **Mike Richardson** an overall deal. TIME COP was one of those projects.

JEFF: *DR. GIGGLES was also from Largo. Do you remember whether you sold TIME COP before DR. GIGGLES?*

MARK: I think we were working on TIME COP at the time of DR. GIGGLES. In late '91, we set it up with Largo. In summer '92, I did the drafts. DR.

"I was in the amazing position of having three going at once. MASK, TIMECOP and DARKMAN."

looking movie. I was very happy with that."

GIGGLES came out in fall, '92.

JEFF: *What's the budget of the projection?*

MARK: I think it's around $30 million.

JEFF: *When's it coming out?*

MARK: September 13th or 16th.

JEFF: *So we can see those $30 million on screen?*

MARK: It's a big-looking movie. I was very happy with that. Jean Claude is very good in it. **Ron Silver,** who plays the bad guy, is excellent.

JEFF: *Who's the wife?*

MARK: Mia Sara, who was in FERRIS BUELLER and LEGEND. His partner, who's a woman, is **Gloria Reuben.** I'm happy with the whole cast, too. A great part is this fellow, **Bruce McGill** (best known as the mean biker in ANIMAL

I'M A DEAD MAN AND YOU KNOW IT, WALKER-- YOU SHOULD HAVE LET ME DROP.
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WHAT DID ATWOOD SAY? "THOUGHT YOU'D PASS THIS TIME, MAX."
I COULD SEE IT IN THEIR FACES--THE OTHER COPS AND TECHIES. IT WASN'T THAT THEY WANTED ATWOOD TO GET AWAY WITH IT--

"I loved comics and collected them a

HOUSE), who plays **Van Damme's** captain. Universal's releasing it.

JEFF: *Is this your first produced screenplay from your writing?*

MARK: I was in the amazing position last year of having three going at once. I had THE MASK, which I was fairly removed from but which was in production; TIME COP, which was in production wrapping; and I did a rewrite on DARKMAN II, which went into production as TIME COP was wrapping.

JEFF: *How does this feel? This is the first time you're putting words into the mouths of actors and seeing the results in big-budget productions.*

MARK: It feels great. I went to a test screening with **Mike Richardson** and a fellow named **Todd Moyer,** who runs Dark Horse Entertainment here under Mike. As the screen goes up and TIME

long time. They're a great art form."

Time Enforcement Agent Max Walker (Jean-Claude Van Damme, right) pursues a hired assassin (James Lew) in the futuristic thriller TIMECOP.

COP starts, you see your name up there and go, "Wow!" This is the whole point of this racket. This is what it's about.

JEFF: *What people who don't know you should know is that you're a big film fan.*

MARK: In my senior year of high school, I saw something like 350 films. I saw a double feature every other night. No video back then. I went to school in film and took about 100 hours in film classes.

JEFF: *People who know you from comics . . . you used references in films?*

MARK: I loved comics and collected them for a long time. I think they're a great art form. In some ways, they're a more personal art form than films. I read comics until my early 20s, in the late 1970s. There really wasn't much then to attract you. In 1983-84, **Randy Stradley**, who's a friend of mine and an editor at Dark Horse, pointed out to me this guy named **Frank Miller** was doing some pretty great work at Marvel on DAREDEVIL. I started buying those. In 1985-86, WATCHMEN came out, and I got back into comics in a big way.

JEFF: *Let's go back to TIME COP for a moment. Did you meet Van Damme?*

MARK: I went up to the set for a day. I did four rewrites on the screen. **Peter Hyams** is the director. He did CAPRICORN ONE, NARROW MARGIN and 2010. I had a bunch of meetings with him. We worked on the successive drafts. It was all shot in Vancouver, BC. I met Jean Claude for a minute.

JEFF: *When you were writing it, did you have an actor you saw in the role?*

MARK: Everybody asks me that. I really didn't have anyone in mind. If I had anyone as a reference, it was **Kurt**

Cover painting by Denis Beauvais for Dark Horse's TIMECOP comic.

"Comics are a more personal art form than films."

Russell in the ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK era. The older Max Walker, whose wife has been dead for ten years, is an embittered man. That idea is a **Kurt Russell** idea. I was very happy with Jean Claude. The way that worked was that he got the script on a Friday. By Monday, he'd blown off all his other projects. This was his next movie. When he said that, things just started rolling. This is by far his best acting job. This gives him more of a range. He's good in it.

JEFF: *When you found out it was him, did you do a rewrite to accommodate him for the role?*

MARK: We would do a rewrite for anybody. We rewrote it to play to his strengths. One of those is his physical

"I wrote a comics adaptation of the movie, from my script. It's two issues."

"Van Damme got the script Friday. By

During his mission into the past, Time Enforcement Agent Max Walker (Jean-Claude Van Damme) must confront the temptation to prevent a personal tragedy — the murder of his wife, Melissa (Mia Sara), in the futuristic thriller TIMECOP.

Monday, he'd blown off all other projects."

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"I was asked to do a rewrite on DARKMAN II."

strength. We added some action scenes and a few good fight scenes.

JEFF: *What's the nature of the special effects in the film?*

MARK: **Peter Hyams** came up with the idea to show the universe wrapping around you when you enter the time stream. There are some really great tone effects. Some characters meet themselves in past history. These are done by computer. They look a lot better than, say, THE PATTY DUKE SHOW. There's a nice scene where Jean Claude helps his younger self at night in the rain with a moving camera. It's amazing.

JEFF: *In WILDSTAR, the Image comic, there's a similar story angle.*

MARK: **Gerry Jones** was telling me of this idea of a guy going back in time to help his younger self.

JEFF: *Tell me of the comic-book version of TIME COP.*

MARK: I wrote a comic-book adaptation of the movie which is coming out. If anyone's interested, it's from my script. It's two issues, with **Ron Randall** doing the art. He's very good on science fiction. Whether we do more is dependent on sales. The market is bad. Retailers are scared to buy anything new.

JEFF: *You guys own the character?*

MARK: Mike and I own the rights.

JEFF: *So you could continue the character indefinitely if you wanted to?*

MARK: Comics are separate. We can do what we want.

JEFF: *Would you like to do it?*

MARK: I would, but it really depends on the market.

JEFF: *Wasn't there a TIME COP story in . . .*

MARK: DARK HORSE COMICS. The first three issues of that had a serialized TIME COP story, introducing some of the time-travel stuff. But it's a different story from the movie.

JEFF: *If anybody loves the movie, they can find those three issues.*

MARK: They might still be in print at Dark Horse.

JEFF: *Let's move on to DARK MAN II. What's Raimi's involvement?*

MARK: **Raimi** is the producer on TIME COP. I also did a rewrite for a project called ATLAS at Universal, a futuristic story about a slave rebellion in a fascist future. I first met Sam on TIME COP. We worked together on that. Then I was asked to do a rewrite on DARK MAN II.

JEFF: *We both have a love of Raimi's film, EVIL DEAD 2. Is that not one of the best top ten films of all time?*

MARK: It's definitely a great movie.

JEFF: *It must have been a thrill to work*

"I'm working on ATLAS for Sam Raimi.

Sexy lounge singer Tina Carlyle (Cameron Diaz) in New Line Cinema's action-comedy THE MASK.

with Sam personally

MARK: I wrote in one of THE AMERICAN issues right after EVIL DEAD 2 came out, saying this is the best movie of the last ten years. He's really fun to work with.

JEFF: *Is he a comics fan?*

MARK: He has a comics sensibility.

JEFF: *What's the idea behind the second film? Was the first that successful?*

MARK: It was successful on video. I think it did $30 million domestically in the theaters, which certainly isn't a bomb. They're making two DARKMAN movies back to back, DARKMAN II and DARKMAN III. Both are intended to go straight to video. Budgets were $3 million apiece. Not to make this confusing, DARKMAN II is actually DARKMAN III now. **Larry Drake** is back in the second. **Jeff Fahey** is the bad guy in the third. Arnold Vosloo plays Darkman. He was the evil Pick in HARD TARGET. Interestingly, **Mike Werb** rewrote THE MASK. I rewrote **Werb** on DARKMAN II.

JEFF: *DARKMAN III — what's the premise?*

MARK: A ruthless crime boss, **Jeff Fahey,** is ripped off by Darkman, who's going around the city ripping off mob people so he can buy the research tools he needs to try to cure himself of these horrible burns. **Fahey** comes to the conclusion that if he can create an army of Darkmans, he can be an unstoppable force in the city. He captures Darkman and tries to figure out the secret of his strength. Darkman falls for **Fahey's** wife. Disguised as **Fahey,** Darkman strikes up a relationship with her. She doesn't understand how he's turned into this nice guy. It has a rock-'em sock-'em finale.

JEFF: *What do you think its chances are in direct video?*

MARK: I think they chose Darkman because he's a franchise-able character with a lot of name recognition.

JEFF: *What's the release schedule?*

MARK: November '94, and February '95 for mine.

JEFF: *What's next for you?*

MARK: Home movies. *(Laughter.)* I'm still working on ATLAS for **Raimi.** I'm now rewriting VIRUS. This is a Universal in-house project, no producer attached. It's about a guy who gets a computer virus in his head and how this

I'm now writing VIRUS for Universal."

affects perception. That's the gist. After that, I'm in negotiations to work with **Mike Richardson** and **Larry Gordon** on a MASKesque project. After that, there are other possibilities. But, I think this one will be the next one.

JEFF: *I think once TIME COP comes out, your value goes up.*

MARK: If it takes.

JEFF: *Let's talk about the lost Mark Verheiden. What happened with you and comics?*

MARK: I ended up going into movies. There are guys who've done 5,000 comics who still do good comics. But, I think it's easy to burn out doing comics a lot on a regular basis. I don't know that I burned out, but I felt that I was pushing the envelope. I needed a break. The break's been so long that it doesn't feel like I did them.

JEFF: *Is there an existing comic you'd like to write?*

MARK: I have a deal with **Archie Goodwin** to write a LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT, which I pitched three years ago. I'd love to do one Batman in my life. I have been talking to other editors about other stuff. I'd like to stay involved in comics. But, the success of Image and other superhero-related lines has pushed the stuff that I'd like to do out, so you can't make any money doing it. I don't need to get rich doing comics, but you do need to break even to keep doing them. I think the market moved away from books I tended to like.

"Image and other superhero-related lines have pushed the stuff I'd like to do out."

"The market moved away from books I like."

The mask (Jim Carrey) exacts his revenge on a noisy motorist in New Line Cinema's action-comedy.

JEFF: *What about going back to THE AMERICAN?*

MARK: In this market, I don't think it would sell. There was a time when comics sold on concept — WATCHMEN, V FOR VENDETTA, CONCRETE. There's become a very big star system in comics. Without a big star, it's difficult to get anyone to sample it. There are exceptions — **Jeff Smith.**

JEFF: *What about entering Dark Horse's "Comics Greatest World" universe as a writer.*

MARK: We've talked about that. We've talked about doing a Time Cop crossover with one of the characters.

JEFF: *You've certainly done your share of ALIENS and PREDATOR comics. Is there still a market for that?*

MARK: I have a PREDATOR story to be told. It's the bleakest one you'll see in your life.

JEFF: *Do you have a dream project in comics?*

MARK: I have two things I'd love to do in comics. I think the only way I'll be able to do them is to pay someone to do them with me. Perhaps we can enter a partnership with Dark Horse or self-publish. One of the benefits of working in the movie business is you make a few bucks. this is something I'd like to do. One would be a ten-issue mini-series to take the idea of a guy who gets one very specific power and show how it affects

"It's easy to burn out doing comics. I needed a break."

"There was a time when comics sold on concept."

Stanley Ipkiss (Jim Carrey) contemplates the awesome powers of The Mask in New Line Cinema's action-comedy.

"One of the benefits of working in the

Stanley Ipkiss (Jim Carrey) rescues sexy lounge singer Tina Carlyle (Cameron Diaz) in New Line Cinema's action-comedy THE MASK.

him personally and the world around him. Work it through on every permutation.

JEFF: *When you look at your own future, I'd assume it's more towards film than comics.*

MARK: Both. And I'd like to do a novel. I'd like to do novels because they're the prose equivalent of being able to write and draw in comics. In novels, you may have editors, but it's going to be your stuff. I'd like to try new things.

I wanted to mention in passing that none of this would be possible without my wife Sonja and son Ben, who are my support crew and team at all times.

movie business is you make a few bucks."

Jim Carrey as The Mask in New Line Cinema's action-comedy.

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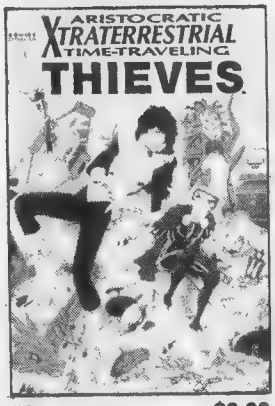

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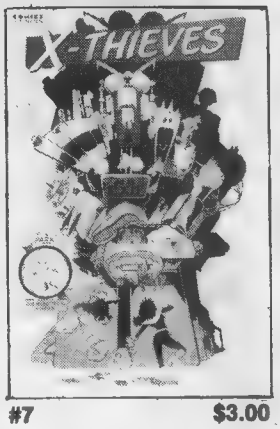

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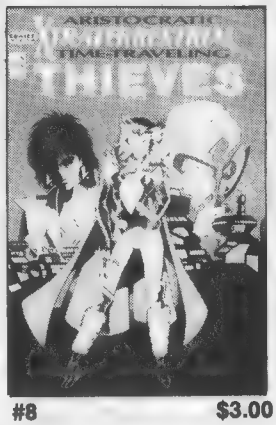

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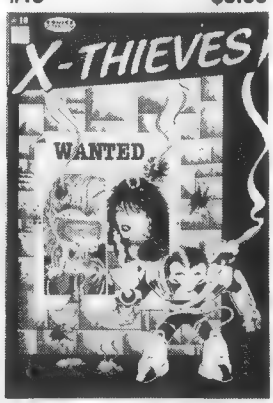

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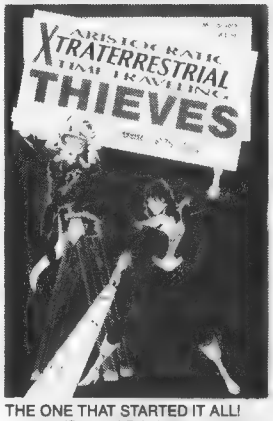

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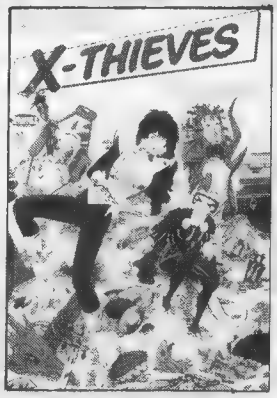

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THE KID GLOVES ARE OFF!

Dear DAK;

This letter concerns the end of Comics Unlimited Distribution. We found it hard to believe when we heard the news that CU had been bought out by Diamond Comics Distribution. Fortunately, **Walter Wang** and **Ron Forman** are no slouches. They're both capable businessmen that are able to recognize a good deal when they spot one. Obviously this is something they wanted to do, most likely planning to turn a tidy profit in the process. Then we read **Peter David's** account in CBG, the following week. Can you believe Marvel? Talk about censorship!

Since the decision was already made to sell CU to Diamond before Marvel pulled its product, Walter and Ron weren't forced into selling the company by the actions of Marvel. Hopefully, everything worked out for them. But . . . what if they hadn't intended to sell CU? Of late, a great number of retailers have raised their voices in protest, stating that they are the most important link in the direct sale chain. Marvel has proved this untrue. Note To Retailers: Put those pens down and hear us out.

Marvel has proven, by deed . . . not word, time and time again that their primary concern is the bottom line. Don't be mistaken, this is not always a bad thing, unless the company in question refuses to display enough respect for the industry as a whole not to destroy everything in their wake. If Walter and Ron hadn't wanted to sell CU, they would have had to anyway, and probably at a substantial loss. And guess what? All of their 250-plus customers would have taken a major hit, too (even the ones that didn't complain). Look at the time frame: Walter made his remarks in April, Marvel pulled its orders as of May. Where would his retailers have gotten their books for the next few months? According to **Peter David,** Walter rushed the deal with Diamond to ensure all of CU's retailers would have their books. Pretty stand-up guy, don't you think. He made sure his customers' needs were taken care of. After reading "But I Digress," could anyone say the same for Marvel? No. It appeared, to us anyway, that Marvel blew off CU's retailers. Why? Simply because they didn't like the fact that Walter took the retailers' collective voices and stood up for them by defending his customers' right to diversity. Marvel penalized CU for giving its customers the best service it could. While we believe that a publisher has the right to pull its distribution, Marvel has done CU, its retailers, and the retailers' customers a disservice by doing so. And in the process, they came off looking like the class bully.

We understand that Marvel is a corporation, and the purpose of any corporation is to provide goods or services that will make the corporation as much money as possible. But at what cost? Has anyone noticed the price increase Marvel has just instituted on its X-titles? As of September, all of its X-titles will be offered in both "glossy" format at $1.95 and "regular" format at $1.50. The catch is that the "glossy" version will be released two weeks before the regular version. Retailers: How many of you have X-title customers that are going to wait the extra two weeks? Even worse, how many of your customers can afford to spend the extra money monthly without sacrificing one or two other titles? As far as Marvel Mart goes, everybody should be thankful that Marvel played their hand when they did, because it gives retailers a chance to change things. That's right, not just gripe about it, actually get out there and do something . . . before it's too late. Who knows? Marvel might decide to open a chain of comic stores. We feel it's inevitable. If there are any legal minds in the audience, we'd like you to educate us on the anti-trust aspect of this. Before you scoff, consider that Marvel is currently working on a theme park in Florida, and has more licensing (cards, toys, animation) than we can name. They are growing by leaps and bounds. While growth is good in any industry, growth without a sturdy foundation can result in disaster. Many people feel that Marvel isn't concentrating on what should be their foundation: the quality comic book.

Why are we so concerned about Marvel? Wouldn't it be much easier to sit back and let Marvel run roughshod over the industry? Won't their actions eventually blow up in their corporate face, anyway? The answer is simple: Nostalgia. Marvel, to us, will always be "The House That Stan And Jack Built." We grew up on Marvel Comics. Since the inception of Visual Assault Comics Press, we looked up to Marvel as a role model of how a comic company should be run (of course, we were oblivious to Marvel's inner workings), and how characters should be developed. It always hurts when you discover that your role model is flawed. Marvel should be better. They should aspire to a greatness that justifies the title "Marvel." We only hope it's not too late to bring Marvel back to its senses.

With that off our chests, we'd like to address the retailer collective: You guys (and gals) are the front line of the industry. Your opinions can help make or break a title in your area. Instead of customers relying solely on trade magazines to tell them what's hot, good, or just different . . . you as a retailer should do it first. Once again, before you get up in arms, we do realize the amount of product that is out there. Every month we read PREVIEWS, ADVANCE COMICS, CVM, CBG (weekly), WIZARD, HEROES ILLUSTRATED and roughly 75% of the new release books. We also attend local conventions and visit area comics stores to see what the market is like. This is in addition to our 40-hour-a-week day jobs, our respective personal responsibilities, and all the time we spend at Visual Assault Comics Press. Don't tell us you don't have the time. Make it. How can you, in good faith, recommend something to your customers if you haven't read it? How can you offer your customers alternatives if you don't carry them in your store? It's time to reduce the "dependency" and increase the "quality" of the product that you present to your customers. Strengthen your relationships with a variety of publishers, seek out independents and alternative press. Many small-press publishers would be more than happy to send you a sample copy of their product. If you get them . . . read them. We're sure you can match people within your customer base with just about any product in the market. Suggestions: Try a "manager's pick" display or rack which showcases both old and new overlooked books. If you don't have the room, put up a bulletin board with your weekly suggestions. Sure, it's a lot of work, but your end goal should always be to broaden and strengthen your customer base. If you can't get a good enough discount from

LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 N k, NY 10001

your current distributor on independents, then try a distributor that specializes in them. Band together as retailers and exert your buying power. Don't just kvetch and throw up your hands. How long will it be before another distributor ticks off a Major Publisher to the degree where product is pulled from the retailers' hands? How long before the Major Publishers self-distribute? Where will you be then?

To sum up, we understand the ramifications of a letter such as this. A company the size and scope of Marvel has the power to still the voices of small insurgents, and retailers have the ability to affect the overall popularity of a particular product. This letter is not an attack on Marvel or the retailer collective. It's simply a wake-up call. A reality check. Now is not the time to be dealing potentially devastating blows to the comic-book industry. Although comics on the whole have gained greater acceptance of late, the industry itself is not as strong as it used to be. Think twice, people. This is our livelihood we're talking about here. And finally, best wishes to Walter and Ron. Comics Unlimited always gave personalized service and defended the "little guy." This is truly a great loss, no matter what the reason.

Rhyan Scorpio-Rhys, president
Juanita Hicks, vice-president
Visual Assault Comics Press
2402 Bronx Park East, First Floor
Bronx, NY 10467

TOO MANY GOOD ARTICLES

Dear Comics Interview:

I can't put it off any longer. You publish too many good articles for me to risk missing one. Start my subscription with #134.

Thanks.

R.C. Harvey
2701 Maplewood Drive
Champaign, Ill. 61820

Hey, R.C., how'd you manage to hold out this *long? You're a strong, strong man — but when it comes to COMICS INTERVIEW, well, you'll be glad you've finally given in, and we're happy to welcome you aboard. By the way, congratulations on your new book from University Press of Mississippi THE ART OF THE FUNNIES, An Aesthetic History.*

— DAK

BRUZENAK, NOT BUSIEK

DAK —

There's a mistake in the first part of my interview (#133).

Ken Bruzenak, the letterer, took me to the hospital when I had the flu. Ken lives in Reading, used to work for **Steranko,** and is an all-around good man . . .

The interview has **Kurt Busiek** doing this and I don't know him. I know *of* him — he's a writer — but we've never met. He might wonder about what he's doing in my life.

My son, Chris, also helped out a lot, taking me for tests and drugs.

Thanks for interviewing me. Talking to Lou about old times was fun.

Dan Adkins
Reading, PA

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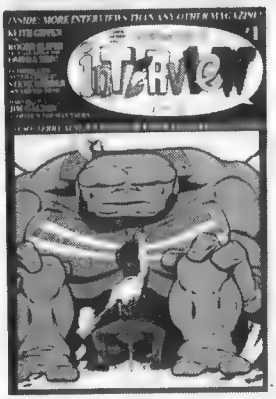
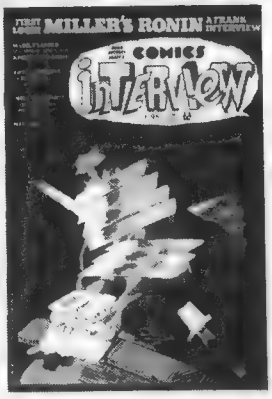


#1-$5.00 **Keith Giffen** on the making of THE OMEGA MEN — **Steve Gerber** speaks out on comics — X-MEN inker **Terry Austin** talks — Marvel's top man, **Jim Galton**, tells all — and much more in this premiere issue!

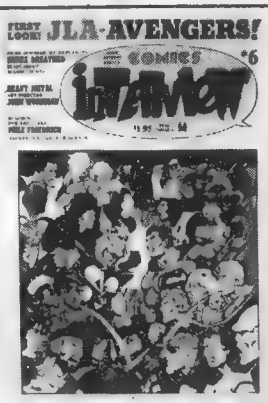


#2-$5.00 **Miller** raps about RONIN — **Mark Evanier** shares secrets of **Kirby's** NEW GODS — **Steve Gerber** asks **Will Meugniot** about DNAGENTS — **Gene Simmons** of KISS on comics — more! Cover by **Frank Miller.**

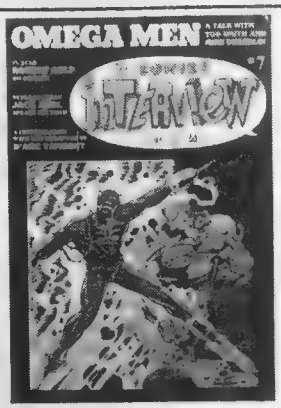
#3 COUNTS AS FIVE **Don McGregor** & **Craig Russell** on KILLRAVEN — Origins of NEW TEEN TITANS told by **Marv Wolfman** — **Howard Chaykin** on AMERICAN FLAGG — French comics by **Neal Adams** — Cover by **Russell.**

#4 COUNTS AS FIVE **Starlin** speaks about WARLOCK, CAPTAIN MARVEL & DREADSTAR — **DC's Dick Giordano**, part 1 — from **Foster** to **Frazetta**, the last **Roy G. Krenkel** interview — Cover by **Starlin.**

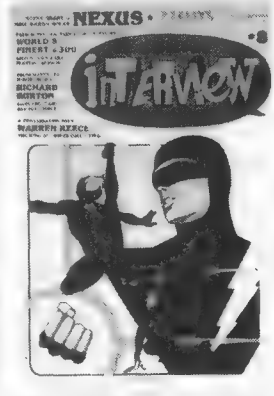
#5-$5.00 **Wendy & Richard Pini** — inside ELFQUEST, part 1 — **Stan Lee**, straight from the shoulder — DC's **Dick Giordano** part 2 — Origins of COMICO. Cover by **Wendy Pini.**



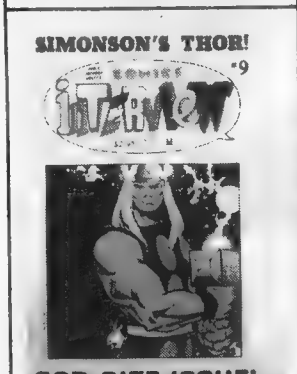
#6 COUNTS AS 3 **George Perez & Roy Thomas** tell all about JLA/AVENGERS feud — inside ELFQUEST, part 2 — **Berke Breathed** blabs about BLOOM COUNTY — more! Awesome cover by **Perez!**



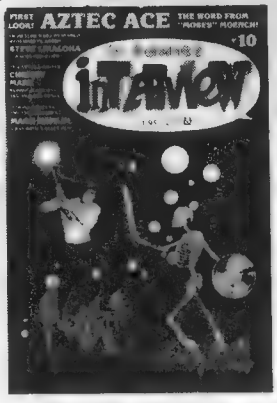
#7-$5.00 Artist **Tod Smith** — inker **Mike DeCarlo**, too — D'ARC TANGENT — TV star **Robert Culp** talks about comics — Marvel artist **Jack Abel** OMEGA MEN cover by **Smith & DeCarlo!**



#8-$5.00 **Mike Baron** and **Steve Grant** discuss NEXUS, WHISPER and BADGER — **Bill Griffith** talks about ZIPPY THE PINHEAD — **Richard Burton** on British comics — plus more! Cover by **Steve Rude.**

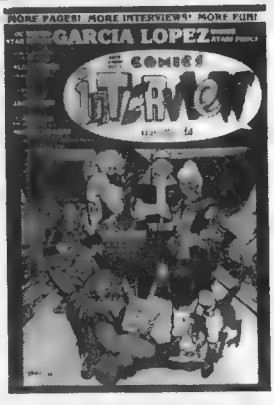


#9 COUNTS AS FIVE GOD-SIZE ISSUE **Walt Simonson**, the man and his art — grand master **Joe Kubert** gabs — A walk down memory lane with comics giant **Gardner Fox** — much, much more!! THOR cover by **Simonson.**



#10-$5.00 **Doug Moench** on his SF series — from **Starlin** to STAR WARS, a wacky interview with **Steve Leialoha** — **Christy Marx** on women, sex and RED SONJA — more! ACE cover by **Hernandez & Yeates.**

#11 SOLD OUT **John Romita, Jr.** talks about Marvel from IRON MAN to X-MEN — **Doug Moench** (part two) on his stormy career and the state of comics — inside Pacific Comics — more! X-MEN cover by **Romita!**



#12-$5.00 DC artist **Jose Luis Garcia Lopez** (TEEN TITANS, ATARI FORCE) — EC artist **Jack Davis** — TV's **Mr. Rogers** — star scripter **Alan Moore** talks about superheroes — **Louise Simonson** — more!

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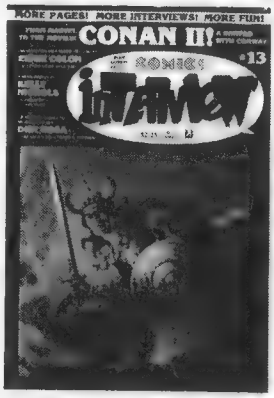
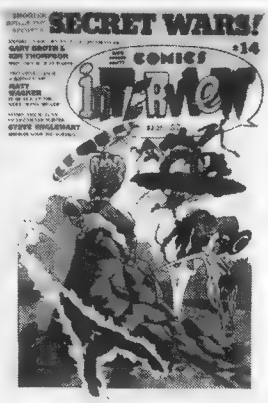
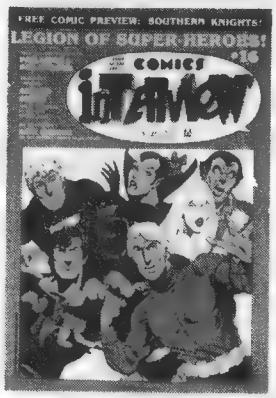


#13-$5.00 **Gerry Conway & Roy Thomas** sound off on scripting movies (Conan, Fire & Ice) and comics — a two-fisted talk with outspoken artist **Ernie Colon** — porn star **Kelly Nichols** — **Don Rosa** — more!



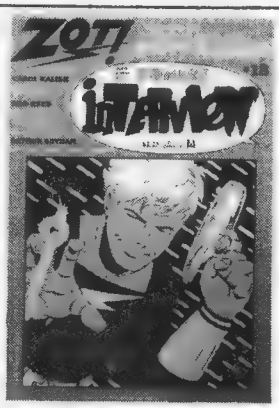
#14-$5.00 **Jim Shooter** talks about SECRET WARS! **Gary Groth** of COMICS JOURNAL! Scripter **Steve Englehart** sounds off on SILVER SURFER and other surprises! SECRET WARS cover by **Mike Zeck!**

#15-$5.00 **Co-creators John Ostrander & Tim Truman** on GRIMJACK! VOID INDIGO artist **Val Mayerik! Richard Pini & Colleen Doran** on A DISTANT SOIL! Great cover by **Truman!**

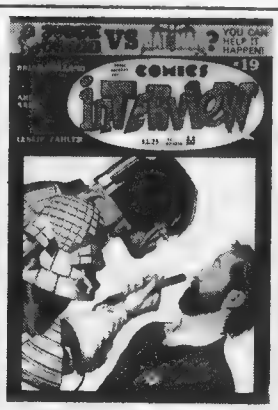


#16-$5.00 THE LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES! Writer — and DC Vice President — **Paul Levitz,** and artist **Dan Jurgens** — DOOM PATROL creator & original X-MEN writer **Arnold Drake** rattles skeletons at DC!

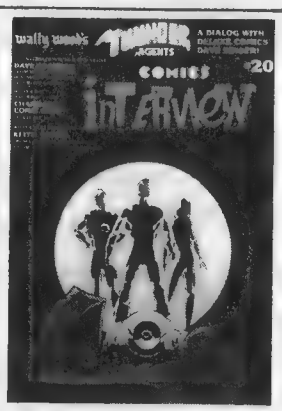
#17 COUNTS AS FIVE THE ELEMENTALS! Creator **Bill Willingham** talks about this super-group! **Jerry Grandenetti** his years with **Will Eisner!** — Golden Age great **Gaylord DuBois.** Cover by **Bill Willingham**



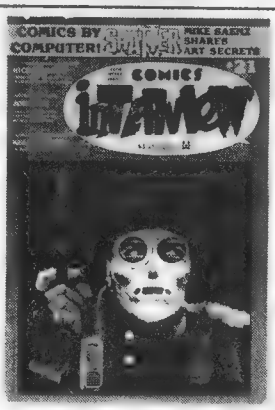
#18-$5.00 ZOT! writer/artist **Scott McCloud!** A rap with original CAPTAIN MARVEL writer & Golden Age great **Rod Reed** — HEAVY METAL artist **Arthur Suydam** — Marvel's **Carol Kalish!**



#19-$5.00 **British artist Brian Bolland** breaks the silence about the secret BATMAN VERSUS JUDGE DREDD project he and **Alan Moore** have been working on! COMIC BUYERS GUIDE's **Don & Maggie**



#20-$5.00 AMBUSH BUG alumnus **Keith Giffen** and X-MEN artist **Dave Cockrum** — publisher **Dave Singer** about the T.H.U.N.D.E.R. AGENTS — news of the NIGHTCRAWLER mini-series



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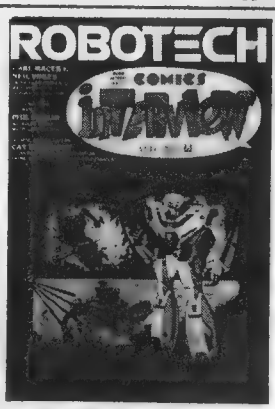
#22-$5.00 Marvel Destroys the **Fred Hembeck** Universe. . . er. . . something like that — Marvel artist **Tom Yeates** talks about TIMESPIRITS — and celebrated British writer **Ramsey Campbell** on comics!



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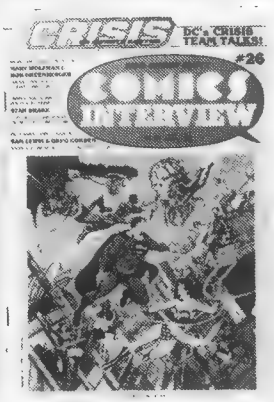
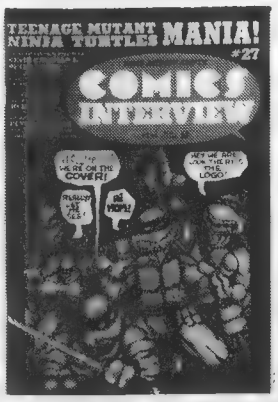


#26 COUNTS AS FIVE **Marv Wolfman:** CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS—syndicated artist **Stan Drake**—DC Heroes Role-Playing Game designers talk about DC secrets—**George Perez** CRISIS cover!



#27-$5.00 TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES' **Eastman & Laird**—**Stan Drake**, part 2—Marvel's **Jo Duffy** on STAR WARS—Marvel & First writer **Peter B Gillis**—original TURTLES cover!

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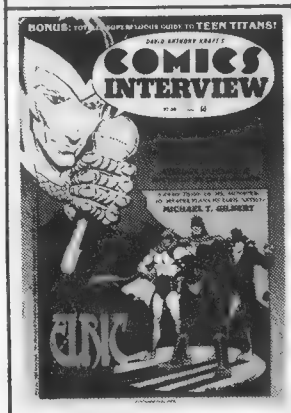

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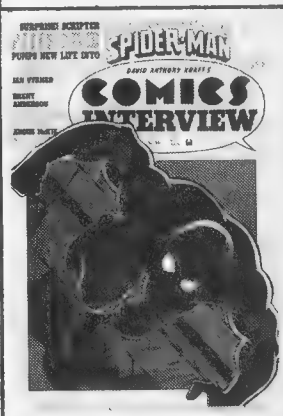
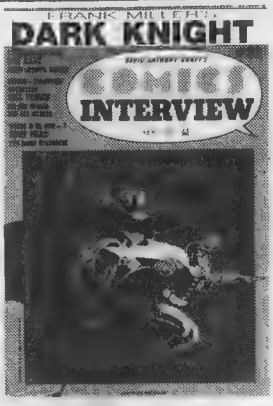
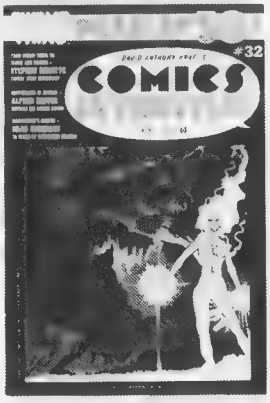


#30-$5.00 **Marvel's Peter David** on SPIDER-MAN—**Jan Strnad** on DALGODA—British HEAVY METAL artist **Angus McKie**—**Brent Anderson** tells why he turned down X-MEN!



#31 COUNTS AS 3 **Frank Miller's** DARK KNIGHT—creators of the Original Batman: **Kane, Finger, Robinson, Rousos** having conflicting memories—TV's Robin, **Burt Ward**—**Miller** DARK KNIGHT cover!



#32-$5.00 SWAMP THING artist **Stephen Bissette** and special portfolio—SF and Golden Age Green Lantern writer **Alfred Bester**—MARMADUKE'S Brad Anderson—SWAMP THING cover!

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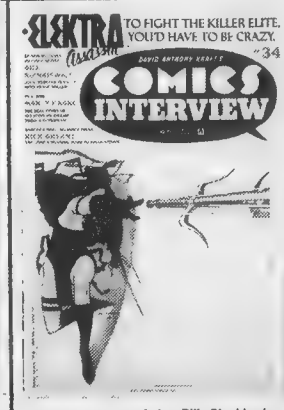
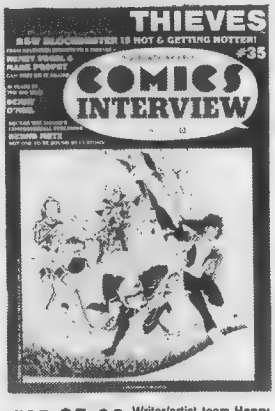


#34-$5.00 Artist **Bill Sienkiewicz** on **Miller's** ELEKTRA—SWAMP THING, SUPERMAN & TV writer **Marty Pasko**—**Rick Bryant** on ghosting X-MEN art—**Alan Weiss**, part 2—ELEKTRA cover!



#35-$5.00 Writer/artist team **Henry Vogel & Mark Propst** on X-THIEVES and SOUTHERN KNIGHTS—**Denny O'Neill**, Marvel/DC writer/editor—Catalan publisher **Bernd Metz**—more!—THIEVES & KNIGHTS cover!

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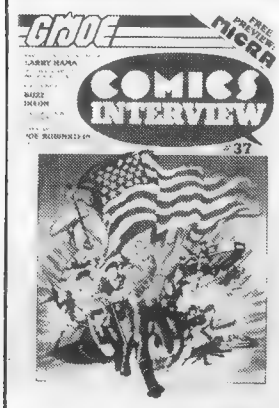

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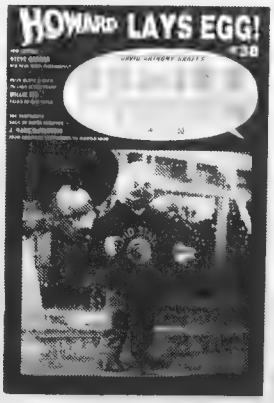

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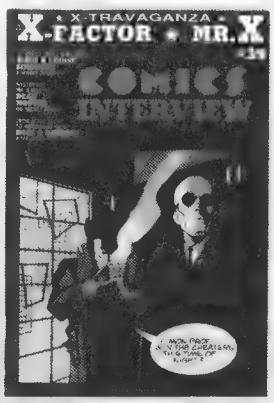

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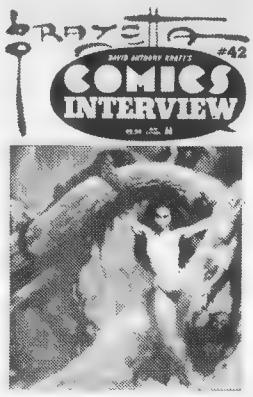

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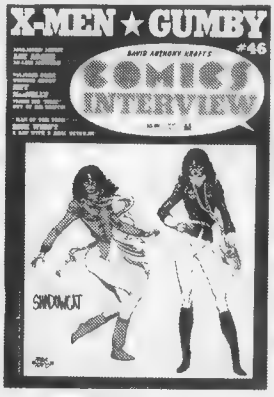

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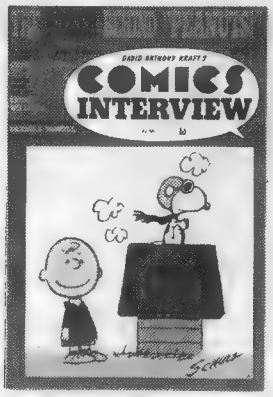

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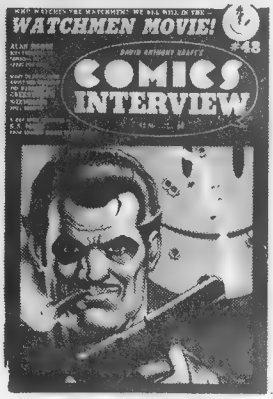

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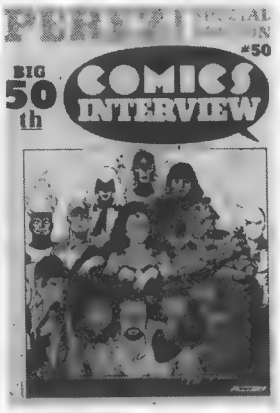

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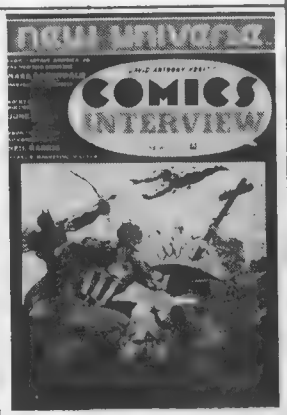

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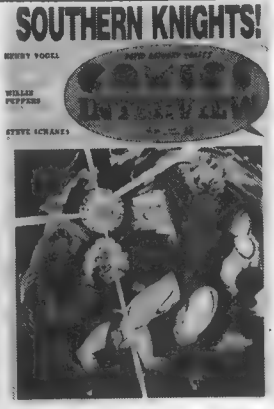

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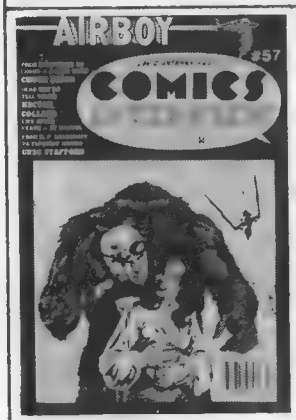

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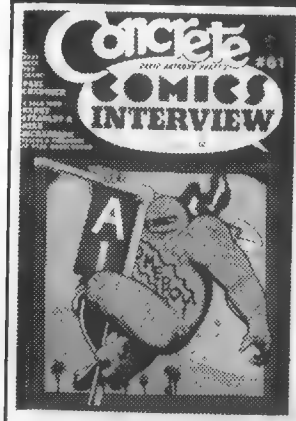

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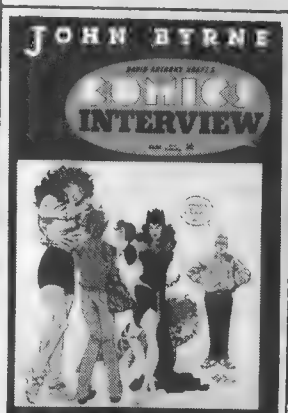

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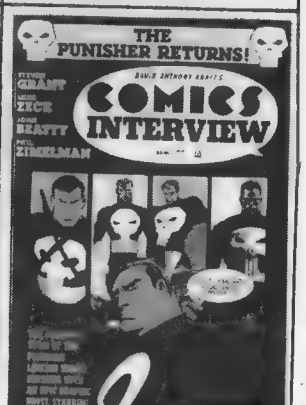

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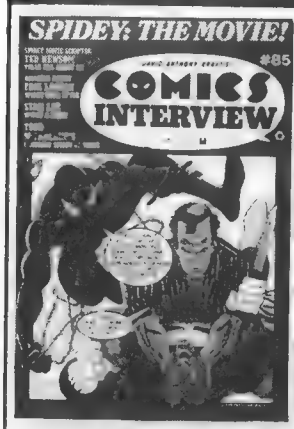

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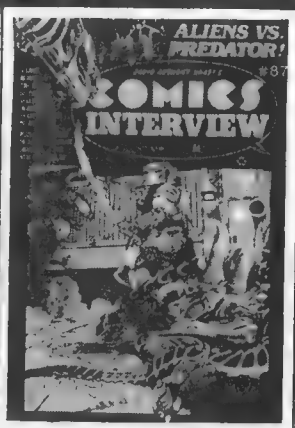

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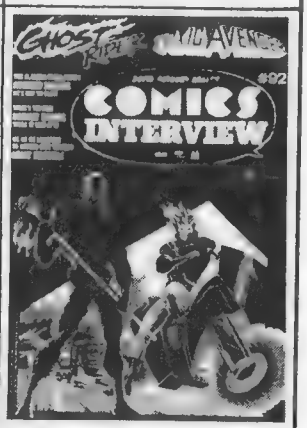

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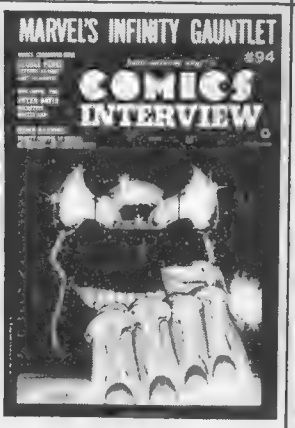

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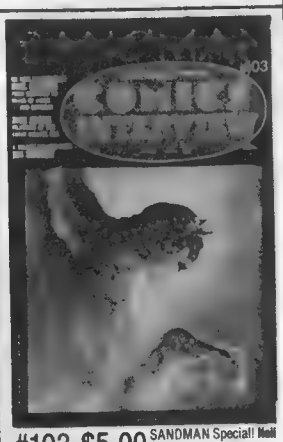

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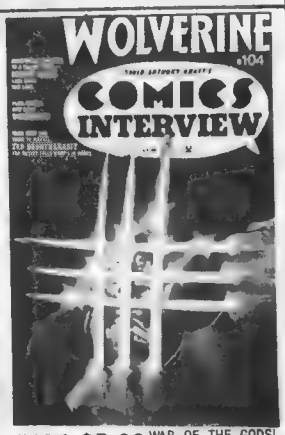

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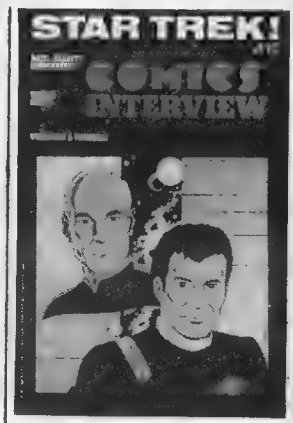

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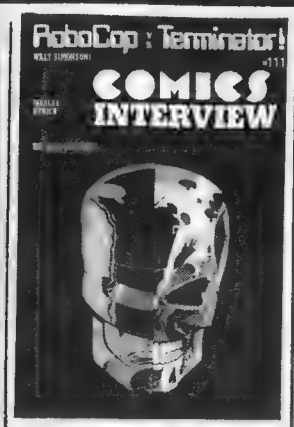

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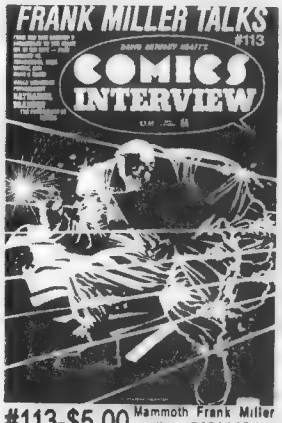

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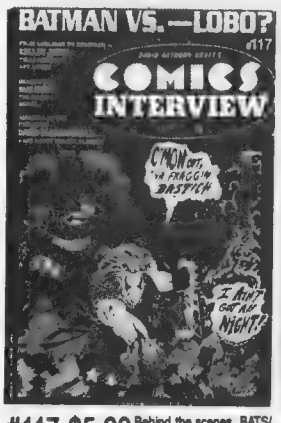

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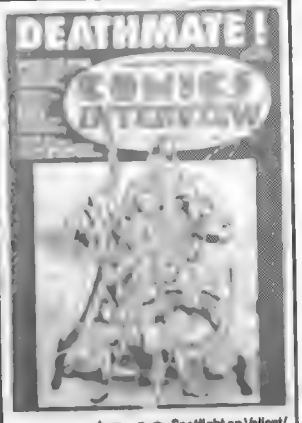

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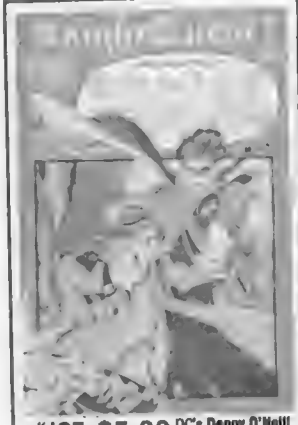

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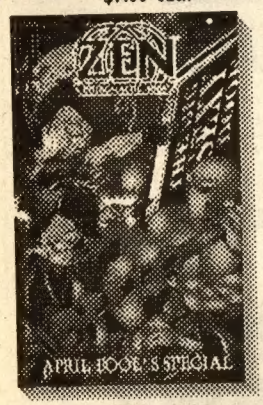

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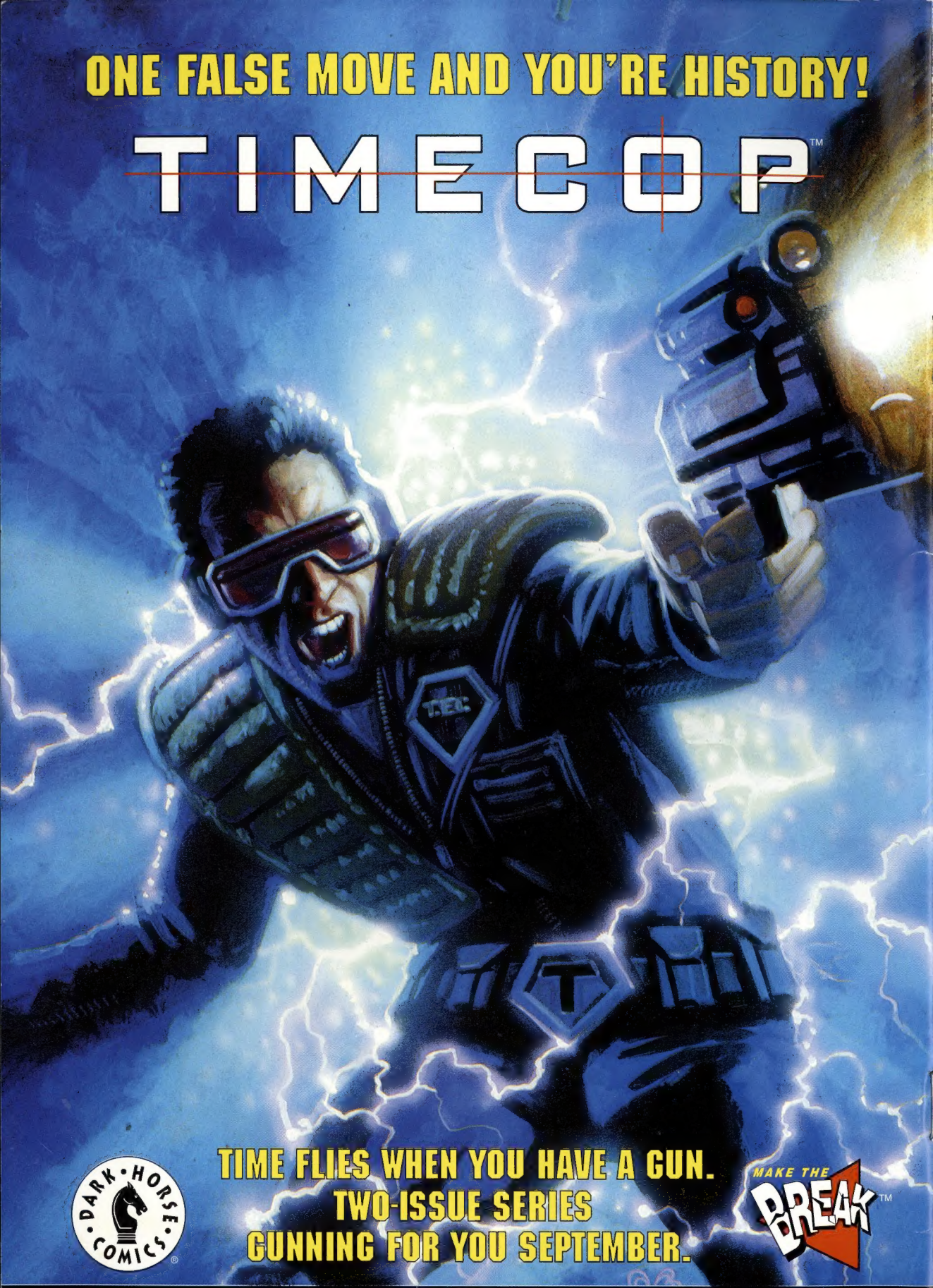

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